

# The Hose Line



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## From The Chief's Desk

I don't get around to the stations like I would like to and so...as odd as it may seem this late into January, I would like to wish everyone a happy and safe new year! Let me first say last year we responded to more fire alarms than ever before, 9,274. Nice job! Along with responding to all of those alarms and training, we also attended many neighborhood meetings. On October 25, 2011 CONO held their annual awards banquet. I had the pleasure of accepting their "Helping Hands" award for our involvement in the City's neighborhood events and meetings. The award was presented to DFD by Police Chief, Todd Walker. The following is a portion of his presentation speech.

*"When you think of the services the fire department does for the residents of a city, or better yet a neighborhood, the thought does not come to mind of attending neighborhood meetings. They have a reputation for fire prevention and putting out fires! Decatur's Fire Department is different, they do all the **fire** things they are supposed to do just like any other fire department but ours goes the extra mile. They attend those neighborhood meetings and share their knowledge with the neighborhood residents regarding information that could save enumerable lives."*

I wanted to pass this along so everyone can appreciate the impact we make when we attend CONO events. Our involvement in the neighborhoods offers opportunities for citizens to become more aware of the various services we provide and the people do appreciate it. Next time you are at Station One check out the award. It is on display in the lobby.

In other Department news, the Mayor officially requested the re-grading of our City's Public Protection Class (PPC). Currently Decatur has a PPC rating of four (4). Our last grading was April, 2001. Since that time, the City has made many improvements in the three grading areas; water supply and distribution, receiving and handling calls, and the fire department. Insurance Service Office (ISO), grades community's public protection and their agent will be in Decatur the week of March 26, 2012. Prior to ISOs arrival, each Division of the City to be re-graded will be collecting data and completing surveys. For those of you that have been around for awhile, Decatur has made some significant improvements in the ISO grading areas and we are hopeful these improvements will be reflected in a reduction to our PPC rating.

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## Monthly Incident Counts

Incidents by Unit				Incident Type Summary				
	Unit	Oct-11	Nov-11	Dec-11	Type of Alarm	Oct-11	Nov-11	Dec-11
311	Fire Chief	-	-	-	1st Alarm	27	26	20
312	Deputy Chief	-	1	1	EMS	572	521	488
313	Fire Marshal	-	-	-	Supervisory	66	57	47
316	3rd BN B/C	-	-	-	Still	172	144	139
701	Fire Inspector	4	1	-	2nd Alarm	1	-	-
702	Fire Inspector	5	9	8	3rd Alarm	-	1	-
703	Fire Inspector	2	3	3	Airport Alert	-	-	-
BC1	Battalion One	37	34	26	Fire Investigation	-	1	-
E-1	Engine 1	206	199	169	Total for All Incidents	838	750	694
E-2	Engine 2	69	43	32				
E-3	Engine 3	165	146	153				
E-4	Engine 4	129	115	95				
E-5	Engine 5	148	137	119				
E-6	Engine 6	123	126	117				
E-7	Engine 7	49	54	41				
E-8	Engine 8	-	-	-				
E-9	Engine 9	-	-	-				
Sq1	Squad 1	1	-	-				
T-1	Tower 1	89	83	71				
T-2	Truck 2	113	76	81				
Total Calls Per Unit		1,140	1,027	916				

## October Monthly Report

During October, the Decatur Fire Department responded to 837 calls for assistance. Of those calls for assistance, 10 were structure fires that caused \$256,500 in direct property loss. Other fires (vehicles, non-structure, brush, etc) totaled 11 with \$2,500 in direct property loss. The Fire Department also responded to 475 rescue/emergency medical calls, 62 false alarm calls, 3 mutual aid given, 39 hazmat responses, and all other calls totaled 237.

FF Kevin Koehn began his 2<sup>nd</sup> six month deployment to the Middle East with his guard unit.

Seven personnel re-certified in ITLS at DAS Training Center on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. The class was conducted by Ed Kemnitz of DAS, with assistance from 2 DFD paramedics: Tom Colbert & Tina German. Monthly EMS continuing education was over diabetic emergencies with additional training over 2 cardiac meds now available to EMT-Bs to use: nitroglycerin and acetylsalicylic acid. ILS personnel were in-serviced by BC Schneller on revised protocols for field treatment of medical emergencies. BLS personnel were allowed to participate.

Hazmat training for the month included: 8 technicians trained on hazmat suit selections and uses; 10 firefighters trained on putting the MABAS furnish Western Tent Shelter together; 10 technicians trained on how to set up decon.

On October 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, 10 hazmat technicians went to IFSI to be validated for the hazmat team. We worked with a task force after a simulated tornado had hit a city. The taskforce was made up of 3 technical rescue teams and 2 hazmat teams. B/C McGeehon was the incident commander for the task force called Delta. Set up tent and spent the night and return the next day.

A confined space drill was conducted at the Decatur Sanitary District on October 19<sup>th</sup>. We assisted their team on a removal of a patient from a valve pit.

On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, there was a confined space incident at the Tate & Lyle plant. Six confined space technicians and 4 firefighters removed a patient from the bottom of a wastewater tank.

The Fire Prevention Division conducted 9 fire investigations: 1 incendiary, 5 accidental and 3 undetermined. Monthly activities included: plan reviews (9), consultations (2), complaints and follow-ups (8), key box installation/removals (20), inspections/re-inspections (21), fire safety presentations and fire safety house visits (12), and fire drills (1). Fire Prevention and Station #1 staff conducted two full weeks of National Fire Prevention Week programming involving over 1200 students, teachers and visitors. School fire drills were given to the schools in Decatur. With few exceptions the fire drills went in orderly fashion and schools were evacuated in a timely fashion.

## November Monthly Report

During November, the Decatur Fire Department responded to 750 calls for assistance. Of those calls for assistance, 14 were structure fires that caused \$132,800 in direct property loss and one civilian death. Other fires (vehicles, non-structure, brush, etc) totaled 16 with \$19,400 in direct property loss. The Fire Department also responded to 424 rescue/emergency medical calls, 56 false alarm calls, 2 mutual aid given, 24 hazmat responses, and all other calls totaled 214.

This month's training focused on SCBA. A consumption drill at station 2 was held. This was a last breath drill utilizing moderate work, using leg and upper body strength. It exposed our firefighters to the reality of the limited amount of time firefighters actually have when using SCBA. Emergency procedures on SCBA were reviewed by the company officers. Policies F-112 and F-109 were reviewed by the company officers with their crews as well. These also dealt with the use of SCBA. Fit testing for SCBA continued in November. This fit testing is required by the Illinois Department of Labor. Some minor repairs were accomplished on facepieces.

Training on the new aerial tower was accomplished for all three shifts, by a factory representative from Pierce. The new aerial tower has many new electronic features that our old aerial tower did not have. This training was also provided to personnel of the garage. The Tower was placed in service by 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion after a couple days of mounting tools & equipment.

## December Monthly Report

During December, the Decatur Fire Department responded to 693 calls for assistance. Of those calls for assistance, 14 were structure fires that caused \$150,450 in direct property loss. Other fires (vehicles, non-structure, brush, etc) totaled 5 with \$7,750 in direct property loss. The Fire Department also responded to 397 rescue/emergency medical calls, 42 false alarm calls, 35 hazmat responses, and all other calls totaled 200.

EMS Training for December was recertification in Health Care Provider CPR for all department personnel. Shift instructors were recertified first to the new 2010 American Heart Association standard by lead faculty instructor Lt. Reason. After all instructors are recertified & updated, shift personnel instruction will begin.

Last three 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion personnel went through the SCBA drill with Chief Sekosky at the Training Tower on December 8<sup>th</sup>.

Fire Service Vehicle Operator class began on 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion taught via teleconference by Capt. Bruce.

Familiarization training for all 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion personnel on the new Tower 1 aerial has been going on this month. Station 1 FFs have been conducting this training. Most face piece fit testing is done.

One more make up on the revised ILS Protocols conducted by BC Schneller on December 14<sup>th</sup>. BBP Annual Update make up conducted on December 13<sup>th</sup> by BC Schneller on 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.

BBP Annual update started with a teleconference presentation to 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion by BC Schneller on November 8<sup>th</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion on November 18<sup>th</sup>, and 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on November 22<sup>nd</sup>. Make up were completed on 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion the 29<sup>th</sup> and others will be scheduled as needed and as time and manpower are available on 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions.

Mitch Ward joined 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion as a firefighter on November 23<sup>rd</sup> after a brief stint in Fire Prevention. He is a welcome addition to this battalion.

Fifteen firefighters reviewed all the concrete cutting tools and did some hands on work with them for monthly TRT training. On November 19<sup>th</sup>, haz-mat technicians attended a tabletop session at Tate & Lyle on an ethylene oxide leak in a railcar.

Firefighters toured the Castle & Cooke Storage building

The Fire Prevention Division conducted 12 fire investigations: 4 incendiary, 6 accidental and 2 undetermined. Monthly activities included: plan reviews (13), consultations (4), complaints and follow-ups (1), key box installation/removals (32), inspections/re-inspections (49), fire safety presentations and fire extinguisher training classes (5), and a career presentation at Eisenhower High School.

HazMat team training was lead by Capt. Culp at Station 1 on December 14<sup>th</sup>. Eighteen (18) haz-mat technicians trained on the new level "A" haz-mat suits and container identification. Fire companies toured the AT&T switching buildings on North Street and Mound Road. There were no special ops incidents this month.

Battalion Chiefs began company training over the new evaluation forms.

The Fire Prevention Division conducted 8 fire investigations: 7 accidental and 2 undetermined. Monthly activities included: plan reviews (13), consultations (2), complaints and follow-ups (2), key box installation/removals (31), inspections/re-inspections (29), fire safety presentations and fire extinguisher training classes (2), juvenile Firesetter intervention (1), fire alarm acceptance test (1), and (2) smoke alarm installations.

## DFD History

In response to a barn fire at 1000 North Jasper just before noon on October 23, 1915, fireman Jack Putnam was killed at the Illinois Central Railroad crossing on Condit Street. A man, probably drunk, had waved the Chief's car ahead, right into the path of switching box cars. Just before impact Putnam jumped from the car. The car was hit, but did not turn over. After the collision the other men were shocked and sick at finding Putnam's mangled body sixty feet north of the crossing, under the train. They had not seen him jump, and could hardly believe what had happened. Fireman Jack Putnam was 28 years old, and had been with the Department for six years. He left a wife and a three year old son.

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On November 21, 1890, a railroad switch crew noticed the Wabash Freight house was afire. This was near the present Norfolk and Southern Depot. While the engineer began blowing the locomotive's steam whistle to alert the firemen, another ran to Number Two and gave the fire boys the location, at 5:10 A.M.

The fire streams lacked reach and "punch", and when a couple kegs of dynamite blew up, the fire intensified and caught the Union Elevator, about 100 feet away, on fire. This structure had just been built about 5 weeks earlier, and within minutes the huge four story building was a total loss, as was the freight house. Total losses to both buildings was \$44,000.00.

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At 8:15 a.m. on Christmas Day, 1932, an explosion of accumulated gas pockets took place deep inside the Moweaqua Coal Mine. Fifty-four men were trapped below. A second explosion occurred at 10:00 a.m. Rescue efforts had begun at once, and calls went out asking anyone who seemed able to assist to hurry to the scene.

The situation 600 feet down in the pit was desperate, and seemed hopeless, but dedicated efforts were made by many brave men until that afternoon when the State Mine Director, John G. Millhouse, ordered everyone from the mine to reorganize the search. Many miners, dog-tired and determined to liberate their brother miners, balked, and cried as they finally left the shaft for the surface where anguished relatives of lost miners waited for word.

Specialized mine disaster teams were sent down and worked for several days. Enormous rock falls had occurred throughout the mine, and little tunnels had to be dug over the top of these, and "overcasts", or air ducts, had to be dug rigged up through the loose stone before the teams could proceed further.

All 54 miners had died that day, many burned terribly, some quickly suffocated by after-damp as they tried to escape. Many had died under heaps of loose slate, loosened by the blasts. The body recovery was a dangerous, painfully slow, heartbreaking task. Many of the rescuers had worked with the dead men, and the grisly experience of finding their dead comrades and removing them to the mine surface tore at the heartstrings.

Twelve dead were recovered on Sunday, Christmas Day. On Monday, 28 more bodies were lifted out. Wednesday saw 7 additional corpses removed from the death pit. The last seven were brought out the next Thursday.

The north passage, scene of the explosions, gave up 14 bodies; the main entry held 12 dead miners. The south passage yielded 16 more. One body was found in the west main, and work rooms 15 and 16 contained 11 corpses.

A makeshift morgue had been built of canvas aboveground, near the shaft, and no one was allowed to view the bodies except a couple of old miner who knew all the men and sadly volunteered to identify the remains. The bodies were embalmed, wrapped in clean blankets, sealed in coffins and taken to homes, funeral homes or churches for funerals.

The last 14 recovered bodies were in a bad state of decomposition, and were wrapped in blankets and put in coffins while deep in the mine. These coffins, of course, were never again opened after being brought to the top.

Decatur's rescue squad had gone to Moweaqua to try to resuscitate the men, but of course the delay in recovery and fact the miners had all died nearly instantly made that effort useless. Many of the Decatur firemen stayed and worked around the mine doing what they could for many days after the disaster. They often gave oxygen to the rescuers, who were working in after-damp and bad air much of the time. They would work their day at the firehouse in Decatur, and then head for Moweaqua to do what they could when they got off duty. Of course this seemed the only thing to do, even though they knew they weren't to be compensated for their many days off spent there.

Several of the Decatur firemen were allowed down in the mine at first, but they didn't travel back very far in the tunnels. Eventually only expert rescue teams were allowed to go down. Dick Barry, a Decatur fireman, had mined from 1914 until 1929 in the Niantic and Decatur mines, and was allowed to stay down and assist the entire operation. He stated to the author that he knew most of the dead men. He also told of the horrors of recovering the putrefying bodies and how the rescuers were often drenched with their own vomit when they accompanied the blanket-draped corpses out of the mine.

A major problem was assisting the destitute and heartbroken survivors. Many had lost the only bread winner of the family, and were without food and necessities. After a slow start, relief efforts, food and funds flowed into Moweaqua at a steady rate for many days. Although there was little any neighbor could do to comfort the unfortunate widows and orphans, they did have plenty to eat and the needs for survival.

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A suite of offices in the Millikin National Bank building at 8:13 a.m. on January 12, 1975, sent four firemen to the hospital. One was overcome by smoke and exhaustion, the others were hurt when gases around an electrical panel exploded. The injuries were not serious, however. Through good efforts the damage was kept to \$205,000.00.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The following individuals received commendations in 2011.

Capt. Mike Bishop	Capt. Dan Kline	Capt. Todd McKenzie	
Lt. Mark Allen	Lt. Neil Elder	Lt. Paige Griffy	Lt. Matt Hinds
Lt. Adam Ruderman	Lt. Tom Watkins	Lt. Wade Watson	
FF Shain Harshbarger	FF Tim McElroy	FF Cliff Miller	FF Mike Smith

Official commendations are given to deserving individuals and fire companies in recognition of and appreciation for outstanding acts of public service and personal courage.

Congratulations!

### Happy Birthday

Lt. M. Rosenbery	1/4
Lt. M. Emmerd	1/7
FF J. Foster	1/12
FM L. Meador	1/14
Capt M. Bishop	1/15
FF B. Heitz	1/21
FF B. Heitz	1/21
FF C. Stevens	2/2
FF T. Jackson	2/9
Lt. K. Riley	2/10
Lt. T. Watkins	2/21
Capt. J. Garrett	2/22
FF T. Lay	3/4
Capt S. Parks	3/6
Lt. S. Gillen	3/7
FF B. Workman	3/9
FF A. Maldonado	3/24
FF T. Brauer	3/29
FF S. Harshbarger	3/29
FF T. Colbert	4/2
Insp. M. Wigginton	4/7
FF K. Fenton	4/8
Lt. J. Ohl	4/14
FF B. Gillmar	4/16
FF C. Bright	4/16
Lt. A. Ruderman	4/17
FF J. Snowden	4/18
FF. J. Harding	4/20
FF T. German-Roberts	4/21
FF J. Romack	4/29
FF J. Park	4/30

### Happy Anniversary

FF M. Davis	2/9
Capt. J. Sullivan	2/9
FF E. Joyner	2/21
FF D. Winchester	2/21
FF D. York	2/21
FF B. Eversole	2/22
FF J. Snyder	2/22
Capt. A. Vespa	3/1
FF T. Scheu	3/5
FF s. Harshbarger	3/10
Capt. W. Moore	3/10
Lt. W. Watson	3/10
Lt. M. Emmerd	3/10
Capt. M. Aukamp	3/12
Lt. M. Rosenbery	3/12
Lt. A. Ruderman	3/13
Capt. S. Parks	3/13
FF P. McKarnen	3/15
Lt. S. Reason	3/15
Lt. B. Taylor	3/15
DC J. Abbott	3/15
Lt. D. Gagnon	3/15
FF. S. Barr	3/17
FF. B. Workman	3/17
Lt. K. Riley	3/17
FF T. Colbert	4/12
FF J. Harding	4/12
FF A. Newsome	4/12
FF M. Wakeman	4/12
Lt. T. Watkins	4/12
Clerk K. Hart	4/20